on the basis of words: volume six

COGNITIVE DEFENSIVENESS: INFAMICATE

discreditation by association

from "infamia," disgrace, and "icate," to make or do

Andrew Lehti

September the Twentieth 2024

Abstract: Discrediting others and ideas is not always done through direct confrontation; sometimes it occurs through subtler means, such as associating a person's beliefs or statements with stigmatized ideas. This cognitive phenomenon is pervasive in social discourse, often employed to undermine credibility through indirect means. Infamicate captures this behavior, where the mere suggestion of a negative association is enough to cast doubt on the speaker without directly engaging with their ideas.

A multi-volume collection, each volume focuses on a single word, offering new definitions, clarifications, or translations. Each term is explored in depth, revealing its origins, nuances, and the underlying phenomena that shape its meaning.

Related: cognitive inertia, debate manipulation, social manipulation, lower level cognitive ability

 10.6084/m9.figshare.27098722

Modern Society is Programmed to Infamicate

Infamicate (verb): *The act of discrediting a person or their ideas by associating them with something disgraceful, infamous, or widely rejected, often without directly addressing their actual arguments. This subtle rhetorical strategy shifts attention away from the content of the discussion, instead placing focus on the negative associations implied.*

Derived from the Latin infamia (loss of reputation) and associere ***(to form a connection between or association),*** *originally "Infamaciate," it describes a process where individuals are undermined by implication rather than direct accusation.* Instead of attacking the argument itself, the strategy involves associating the person or their ideas with something notorious, controversial, or disreputable.

Infamicate operates on the principle that guilt by association, even when tenuous, can be enough to sway public perception. For instance, when someone presents a controversial idea, the response, "Oh, so you're one of those conspiracy theorists," infamicates the speaker by linking them to a group that is often dismissed or ridiculed. The original idea is not debated; instead, the person's credibility is indirectly attacked by association with words such as: conspiracy, and flat-earth. This tactic leverages cognitive biases, particularly those related to trust and reputation, as humans are more likely to dismiss arguments from sources they perceive as unreliable or tainted by association.

Cognitive Inertia

Overcoming the effects of infamicate requires the ability to recognize when associations are being used in place of substantive arguments. It often involves disentangling the person from the negative context they are placed in, forcing a return to the merits of the argument itself. Critical thinking and an awareness of rhetorical tactics can help individuals defend against this method of discreditation.

Infamicate in Broader Contexts

While typically observed in verbal or written discourse, infamicate can also manifest in social interactions and media representations. Celebrities, politicians, and public figures are often infamicated through headlines or social media comments that associate their actions or statements with scandals or disreputable causes. This phenomenon has significant social and political implications, as it can distort public discourse and hinder open debate by promoting reputation-based dismissal rather than argument-based critique.

Conclusion: Infamicate arises from a cognitive and rhetorical social phenomenon rooted in cognitive inertia, particularly the discomfort of cognitive dissonance. It subtly undermines individuals by associating them with negative or disreputable ideas. Recognizing and challenging this tactic is essential for preserving the integrity of discourse and ensuring that ideas are evaluated on their own merits, rather than through imposed associations.

Infamicate is a powerful tool for shaping public perception by misleading others through association rather than direct criticism, similar to other cognitive biases that influence communication and interpretation. This includes, but is not limited to, resolving one's own doubt in the moment that doubt arises.

Parts of Grammar:

Adjective: Infamicatory
Definition: Describing something that serves to discredit or disgrace by association.
Example: "The infamicatory nature of the meeting led to widespread distrust of her proposal."

Verb: Infamicate
Definition: To discredit someone by associating their views with a negative or infamous idea without addressing the evidence at hand.
Example: "The politician's critics infamicated him by suggesting his policies were inspired by tin-foil hat ideologies."

Noun: Infamicator
Definition: A person who engages in infamicating others by linking their statements or beliefs with disreputable ideas.
Example: "As an infamicator, she often used subtle associations to undermine her opponents in debates particularly using advanced methods of infamication which appears as if she was asking legitimate questions."

Noun: Infamication
Definition: The process of discrediting someone through negative associations.
Example: "The infamication of his character was complete after the media linked him to several conspiracies."